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ABSTRACT

Based on observations and experiences in a Title III (Elementary and Secondary Education Act) project to individualize instruction in the ungraded Rocky Boy Elementary School (grades 1-6, Rocky Boy Indian Reservation, Box Elder, Montana), this position paper considers the problem of finding a suitable or workable curriculum and classroom climate for teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic in a traditionally designed school. In the paper, the pros of individualized programmed instruction are discussed considering boy vs. girl, development of the self-learner in relation to his culture, peer-tutor relationships, achievement, characteristics of the self-learner in relation to programmed instruction, and contingency management. Cons of individualized programmed instruction are discussed in terms of the non-English-speaking child, the poor teacher, and behavioral objectivity vs. group interaction. It is suggested that individualized programmed instruction for Indian children has merit and needs further study in view of its present short period of utilization. (MJB)

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THE PROS AND CONS OF INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION FOR INDIAN STUDENTS

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A position paper based on observations and experiences in an ESEA Title III Project to Individualize Instruction in the Rocky Boy Elementary School, Grades 1-6, Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation, Box Elder, Montana.

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NATURE AND SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of finding a suitable or workable curriculum and classroom climate for the purpose of teaching Indian children the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic to enable them to progress through the educational institution into the so-called mainstream of our society has baffled the educator for many years. At one period in education, the single textbook seemed to be the only means in which communication took place between the teacher and child as a teaching mode. Also, the graded approach was a convenient way to administer and keep control of students. In other words, fine institutions were created if children were able to fit their organization, schedules, levels, etc. Now the time has come when teaching tools and materials have become more sophisticated, teachers are able to re-train in new methodologie s and are able to perceive other relationships relative to the education process.

This paper will deal with new attempts to stimulate learning for Indian children through the individualization of instruction in an ungraded school. An attempt will be made to deal with a subjective evaluation mainly from observation and some statistical data. The first phase will deal with the background of research from which positions are stated. The second phase will attempt to state the writer's position pro and con to the use of programmed materials for the instruction of Indian children.

PHASE I

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

To acquaint the readers with the background of the research from which the positions will be stated, the writer will attempt to briefly outline the project, it's objectives and the activities and procedures to be utilized in achieving these stated objectives.

The project began in 1968-69 with the help of an ESEA Title III grant. The objective of the project as stated in the application were:

1. Providing for the needs of every school child of Rocky Boy's Indian Reservation so that he may realize his potential and become a productive member of society.
2. Developing a realistic and appropriate curriculum for the children on the Rocky Boy Reservation.
3. Training teachers and aides to meet the unique demands of a school population having a subcultural membership.
4. Helping to develop more positive parental and community attitudes toward education in general.

The plan to improve the educational program focused on the ungraded school, individualization of instruction, and community involvement by:

1. Ungrading the K-6 elementary school program to provide as near of an environment for individualized instruction as possible.

2. Training teachers in the techniques of individualizing instruction and in the understanding of Indian people and their culture.
3. Training instructional aides to assist the teachers in providing for the individualized instruction and to serve as an example to the children and community in the educational process.
4. Selecting, developing, and field testing materials and equipment that can be considered usable in the instruction for Indian children.
5. Providing guidance and counseling services for students, parents, and teachers and involving the community in the educational program.
6. Providing parent education in the basic skills.

The scope of the program involved about 230 students.

The first year constituted formal instruction in individually prescribed mathematics and programmed reading through the McGraw-Hill series. The first year the attempt was to ungrade and individualize instruction in grades one through three. The second year, the continuation grant enabled us to ungrade and individualize instruction through the sixth grade. In other words, there is a completely ungraded 1-6 elementary school with programmed instruction in individually prescribed instruction in mathematics, programmed reading, EDL programmed instruction in beginning reading.

The teachers developed programmed instruction in spelling, and started in the social studies area. After a full years work during the second year there are still many things to be worked out at this time in social studies.

Each classroom was set up as a demonstration laboratory. Instruction in each classroom is conducted by a teacher and an aide. The idea of this organizational pattern was to allow freedom of the student and the teacher to work in the continuums as well as away from the continuums. By allowing this freedom of teaching and movement within this learning laboratory, it was felt that maybe the teacher and the student would not get hung up on a continuum or program to the point that they would be slaves to it, as some are to text books. In other words, the freedom to allow the teacher to get off the continuum if she saw a need after diagnosis and prescribing to do something for a child or group of children, or to take care of the needed skills that were noticeable at the present time. Now each teacher was given ample-supervision on a one to six ratio, six teachers have one supervisor who is able to flow and give help to each teacher. The materials were stored in a central location and could be moved to the classroom. Commercial and teacher developed materials were plentiful in the project. Teaching machines were used mainly in grades one through three. The main emphasis was on student experience and student materials relevant to teaching and learning.

PHASE II

PROS OF INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION

BOY VS GIRL

There appears to be a pattern emerging that is allowing boys to make greater gains and develop more in leadership roles in an individualized process. This could open a completely new perspective in a culture where the female plays the dominant work role.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF LEARNER IN RELATIONSHIP TO HIS CULTURE

This type of program definitely favors the development of the child as a self-learner. This point has many implications relative to the Indian and his culture. Though the Indian was group oriented in many of his activities, he was still considered to be an individualist. The relevancy in relation to learning and the practicality of the process begins to take on meaning. The student is no longer forced to learn in abstractions, he can use manipulative devices to prove his theories and concepts. This process is real in the Indian society and emerges in the functioning of the children.

The implication here is this could be the stimulus that is needed to allow these children to progress at their own rate while adopting good values of both cultures without pressure as noted in Dr. Bryde's work.

PEER TUTOR RELATIONSHIPS

Relationships among students begins to take on a pattern as the students help each other. Now rather than the competition that existed, creating ill and adverse feelings or tensions and hostility among the students who needed more help, a better peer relationship has emerged causing less fights on playgrounds and school buses, which were assumed to have taken place over competition. The students who received A and B grades were usually the victims of the acts while the students with the D and F grades were the aggressors.

ACHIEVEMENT

Programmed instruction will provide a greater range of achievement in Indian children. Some children will gain two or more years in achievement while others might gain .3 of a year based on a standardized achievement test. This pattern will apply to all areas, however a sharp gain can be noted in a special area and it is assumed this is based on interest when student evaluation questionnaires are compared to students achievement profiles.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELF-LEARNER IN RELATIONSHIP TO PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION

Various patterns are emerging that relate to the programmed instruction. Several to be mentioned at this stage is the self-confidence that is developed in Indian children.

Of the 200 visitors who have visited the project during the past two years, special notation has been paid to the visitors who are from other reservations and from people who have dealt with the Indian, that the children in the project are so outgoing and seem so self-confident. To quote one school administrator from a neighboring reservation, "Why the children are so confident of themselves and so outgoing. On our reservation, it's like pulling teeth to get the children to speak. If this program will do this for Indian children, I will go back and implement it." Another characteristic of the development of the self-learner in programmed instruction is the self-prescribing that children are able to do. Children from the first grade on up are able to follow directions, operate machines, and some are even quite aware of their own needs and are able to provide for them. The majority of the fifth and sixth graders have reached this stage of development. In other words, the point the writer is trying to make is that if Indian childrens' confidence can be built up to this point over a period of twelve school years instead of the defeat and degrading self image that emerges from the group and single textbook oriented instruction, the topic should prove worthy of further study.

RELATIONSHIP TO CONTINGENCY MANAGEMENT

Immediately in the use of programmed instruction for cognitive development a relationship emerges to provide techniques to deal with the affective domain. A techique known as contingency management or classroom management to control undesirable behavior and redirect it to desirable behavior enters the scene.

By tabulating and charting students behavior, individualized counseling or tutoring can be done on a one to one basis. In relation to the self-learner, the tabulating and charting can be done by the student to improve his own behavior. A pattern is noted already that the Indian child will accept constructive criticism and react to positive reinforcement on a one to one relationship. If negativism is dealt with in a group approach, the child will regress in a behavior pattern. The contingency management also relates to the economic system through a system of rewards and punishments generally known as the token system. The student is given tokens for favorable acts and deeds and at the end of the week is allowed to trade, continue to save, or cash in for a purchase of his choice. This allows for a decision making process and Indian children are highly responsive to this technique. Again, this is an area worthy of further study over a longer period of time.

PHASE III-CONS OF INDIVIDUALIZED PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION

THE NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING CHILD

The problem of providing for the non-English speaking child still remains to be solved in the implementation of programmed instruction for Indian children. Although, the materials provide for sequenced progression, there are still other language development needs that are unable to be met because of the time factor involved in the individualized programmed process. The need of spending a great amount of time on a child who has to make a transfer from one language to another and learn English as a second language will require a different type of approach.

THE POOR TEACHER

The use of programmed materials requires a good teacher and good teaching. Many of the teachers graduating from college are not trained in the use of programmed instructional materials, therefore the program can be as detrimental as the straight textbook approach. At this point, there is evidence that some people will never be able to teach in this type of program.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVITY VS. GROUP INTERACTION

There is some conflict among educators as to total programmed instruction or allowing for teacher controlled group interaction. After observation for two years, it is the writers position that being closely tied to a programmed continuum can be detrimented. Teachers must be able to offer flexibility in their program to provide for creativity, objectivity, and interaction.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Their is observable evidence that individualized programmed instruction for Indian children has merit and is worthy of further study. The amount of time in which this program has been in effect hasn't allowed for a complete statistical analysis. The university of Montana's Bureau of Educational Research has the contract for an evaluation of the program and this analysis will be released in September, 1970.

The standard or traditional techniques for evaluation seem to be outdated and researchers have a difficult time applying a model. More bite sized research topics appears to be more feasible.

The training techniques used in teacher training are valuable and could open the door to a model in adopting programmed instruction with Bi-Lingual Instruction that will further enhance the relevancy of the learning process of Indian children. This is an area that should be worthy of implementation and further study.

The information in this paper is based on trying to implement an innovative program in a traditionally designed school. If a continuous progress school program could be maintained and coordinated until the Indian children reached a certain level of maturation and experiences to cope with the abstractions of society, I feel great progress could be made in Indian Education.